

A Close Reading of David Ignatow's "Europe and America"

Directions

Read the following poem silently.

My father brought the emigrant¹ bundle
of desperation and worn threads,
that in anxiety as he stumbles
tumble out distractedly;
while I am bedded² upon soft green money
that grows like grass. Thus,
between my father who lives on a bed of anguish³
for his daily bread, and I who tear money
at leisure⁴ by the roots,
where I lie in sun or shade,
a vast⁵ continent of breezes, storms to him,
shadows, darkness to him, small lakes,
difficult channels to him, and hills,
mountains to him, lie between us.

My father comes of a hell
where bread and man have been kneaded
and baked together. You have heard the scream
as the knife fell; while I have slept
as guns pounded on the shore.

¹ emigrant: person who leaves one's country or region to settle in another

² bedded: sleeping or resting

³ anguish: agony, torment, torture

⁴ leisure: freedom from the demands of work or duty

⁵ vast: huge, immense

Initial Reflection

Now that you have read the poem, write a brief paragraph of three to five sentences summarizing the theme of "Europe and America." Include the author and title in your topic sentence.

Example

The theme of David Ignatow's "Europe and America" is _____.

Directions to Listen

Now listen and follow along as the poem is read to you. Do you notice anything you missed the first time?

Text-Dependent Questions

Answer the following using complete sentences.

1. What is one image found in this poem? What idea or theme does the image suggest?
2. How is the speaker's father described in this poem?
3. What is different about the speaker compared to his father?
4. What is the most effective line in this poem? What is its denotation (literal meaning)? What is its connotation (symbolic or suggested meaning)?
5. What is the mood of this poem? What textual evidence best exemplifies the mood?
6. What effect did the poet want this poem to have on readers? What textual evidence reinforces your answer?

Final Reflection

Now that you have read the poem several times and completed text-dependent questions, you should have a deeper understanding of the poem's meaning and effect on readers. In a full paragraph of five to seven sentences, explain how the author uses connotation and denotation in this poem. Include the author and title in your topic sentence. Include at least two quotations from the text that show the author's use of connotation and denotation and explain how they relate to the theme you addressed in your initial reflection.

Examples

In David Ignatow's "Europe and America," the poet uses denotation and connotation to _____.

David Ignatow's "Europe and America" includes many examples of connotation and denotation that _____.

While the line " _____ " denotes that _____,
Ignatow connotes the idea _____.

Beyond the literal meaning of _____, Ignatow suggests that _____.

Readers finish the poem feeling/understanding/contemplating _____.

The poem's effect on readers is _____.